

# NEWS RELEASE



Contact: Kate Naughten, NOAA Fisheries  
(301) 713-2370  
Thor Lassen, Ocean Trust  
(703) 450-9852

NOAA 00-R144  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
August 31, 2000

## **NOAA FISHERIES, OCEAN TRUST AND NATIONAL FISHERIES INSTITUTE LAUNCH HABITAT RESTORATION PROGRAM** *Public, Industry Invited to Join Projects on Three Coasts*

Officials from NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, the National Fisheries Institute and Ocean Trust today announced three community-based habitat restoration projects which will improve a variety of marine habitats important to fisheries in the coastal areas of Texas, Massachusetts and Washington. The projects, which total \$146,000, will be coordinated by Ocean Trust.

"Restoring our coastal environment to a healthy level where it can support a wide variety of marine life is a major undertaking," said Penny Dalton, director of NOAA Fisheries. "With the support of Ocean Trust, the National Fisheries Institute and other partners, we are making progress by encouraging the local community to work with us on restoration projects that highlight the importance of our valuable marine habitats."

Officials also stressed that a major component of each project is the involvement of community-based businesses and volunteers. "We'd like to invite seafood companies, restaurants, retailers and the public to join in this partnership to restore habitat," said Thor Lassen, president of Ocean Trust. "This is a tremendous opportunity to build a strong coalition with public participants to enhance coastal and estuarine ecosystems."

Each partner also echoed the win-win nature of this public/private partnership, which was established in March 2000. "The commercial fish and seafood industry is committed to the restoration and conservation of important fish habitat," said Justin LeBlanc, National Fisheries Institute vice president for government relations. "Restoring these areas means a healthier coastal environment and improved fisheries for fishermen and consumers who love seafood."

- more -

While the overall goal of habitat restoration is the same, the specific designs the three projects are quite distinct.

- ?? In Texas, Ocean Trust will work with local partners through its newly established Texas Chapter to restore native vegetation in conjunction with a larger effort that will restore tidal exchange in the Bahia Grande, a 5,000-acre bay. A major component of this project includes establishing a black mangrove nursery to supply native vegetation for the tidal restoration project. The nursery also will provide educational opportunities for students and other community volunteers. The total cost of the project is \$42,000.
- ?? In Massachusetts, Ocean Trust will work with the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission and other local partners to seed clam beds with hatchery-reared soft shell clams. The goal is to restore a soft shell clam ecosystem on the North Shore into a productive clamming area. Sections of the restored clam beds will be set aside on a rotating basis as non-harvestable “spawner sanctuaries” to help increase the natural productivity and sustainability of area shellfish beds. The total cost of the project is \$50,000.
- ?? In Washington, Ocean Trust will work with the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association, Bornstein Seafoods, Inc., Western Washington University and other local partners to restore over 1,000 feet of salmon habitat in Bellingham’s Squalicum Creek. Improvements will include the removal of stream blockages and the enhancement of the streamside corridor. The project also calls for the removal of non-native plant species and the installation of streambank fencing to help exclude livestock from sensitive areas. A monitoring program also will be established. The total cost of the project is \$54,000.

As the federal partner, NOAA provides support for the partnership through its Community-Based Restoration Program. The program, which is part of NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, has been working with community organizations since 1996 to support effective habitat restoration projects in marine, estuarine and riparian areas. Staff from the NOAA Restoration Center, NOAA Fisheries Science Centers and regional staff work closely with communities to aid in project development and implementation. Projects are monitored and maintained by communities, promoting stewardship and a heightened appreciation for the environment and its well-being.

The National Fisheries Institute is the nation’s leading trade association representing all aspects of the seafood industry. Ocean Trust is a national research foundation working with the seafood industry on habitat restoration and marine conservation. Individuals or groups interested in more information on volunteering in the restoration project, or joining as a sponsor, should contact Ocean Trust at (703) 450-9852 or visit us at <http://www.oceantrust.org/projects>.